

**AUA**

Association of University Anesthesiologists

UPDATE

Association of University Anesthesiologists UPDATE | 2025 | Winter Issue

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues,

Fall is here in Saint Louis. The undergraduate, medical, and post-graduate students have returned. The school sessions have begun! The evening lights of night classes have also commenced. The days are shorter. As the trees change to yellow and then lose their leaves, my thoughts go to the Association of University Anesthesiologists (AUA) 2026 Annual Meeting. Let me explain. The AUA Council, upon receiving advice and input from members, has been feverishly working on a program worthy of our academic faculty! Recognizing that we have tough acts to follow from Washington University in Saint Louis in 2024 to the Harvard Consortium in 2025, as things take shape, we know that we must experience fall and winter before spring, when we will gather in Seattle, Washington.



**Dolores B.
Njoku, MD**
President, AUA
Washington University in
St. Louis
St. Louis, MO

After extensive discussion, we have agreed on a theme: "Discovery, Mentorship and Adaptive Learning in an Evolving Healthcare Environment." We feel that this encompasses our collective thoughts and experiences and provides a platform to move forward. I have served as your President for almost two years, and I am constantly humbled by our discussions, and mostly the time that we spend together working to ensure the future of academic anesthesiology. While it is tempting to review the last two years, I would prefer to inform you about the meeting.

Our keynote this year will be given by Dr. Julie A. Bastarache. Dr. Bastarache is a Professor of Medicine in the Division of Allergy, Pulmonary, and Critical Care Medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee. She also has roles in the Department of Pathology, Microbiology & Immunology and in Cell & Developmental Biology at Vanderbilt and serves as Assistant Vice President for Clinical & Translational Scientist Development at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. She is the force behind the successful Edge for Scholars program and has been elected Vice President of the American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI) for 2024-2025 and will serve as President in 2026-2027. Her research focus is expansive. She

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[Click here to view or print the AUA UPDATE newsletter.](#)

bridges basic, translational, and clinical science in critical pulmonary illnesses and organ dysfunction. She is the Principal investigator for the "Laboratory for Science and Translation in Critical Illness" (LSTCI) at Vanderbilt where she focuses on Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) — mechanisms of lung injury and repair, sepsis and non-pulmonary organ dysfunction (e.g., acute kidney injury, delirium) in critically ill patients, as well as the use of translational models: cell culture, mouse models, human samples and clinical data. She is a "cure hunter" who utilizes novel phenotyping approaches and leverages electronic medical records (EMR) plus genetic/clinical datasets to assess why individuals differ in risk and outcomes. Her mission and vision are aligned with those of the AUA, and I am certain that her talk will be informative and inspiring.

In addition to the Keynote Speaker, we will have the President's Panel. One of our speakers is Dr. Elisa Crouse. She is a board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist (OB/GYN) and holds the title FACOG (Fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists). She holds a Master of Science in Biochemistry from Vanderbilt University and BS in Nutrition & Dietetics from Purdue University and has a significant academic career within graduate medical education. She is the former Associate Dean for GME and Designated Institutional Official at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, where

she oversaw numerous residency/fellowship programs. In 2025, she became Senior Vice President, Institutional and Program Accreditation at the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), where she guides accreditation of sponsoring institutions and programs across specialties. She is recognized for leadership and teaching awards related to residency education and is known for bridging clinical practice and medical-education leadership in GME. She influences how training programs across the U.S. are accredited and structured. As with Dr. Bastarache, her mission and vision are aligned with those of the AUA, and I am certain that her talk will also be informative and inspiring. We certainly will have additional speakers. I suggest that you go to our website and see what exciting talks, panels, and workshops await and stay tuned for more speaker bios as the meeting nears.

In four months, our Annual Meeting will be in Seattle, Washington, March 27 – 29, 2026! As you know, we will be hosted by University of Washington Medicine and held at the University of Washington Husky Union Building (HUB). Our accommodations will be at Graduate by Hilton Seattle. The host program has ensured an engaging and exciting program. The AUA Board Chairs have promised innovative and engaging sessions. I look forward to your continued participation. 

**Don't forget
to follow
AUA on X!**

X @AUA_Anesthesia



FROM THE EDUCATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD (EAB): The Evolution of Medical Education

Past AUA Webinars 2025:

Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Feedback Culture in Medical Education and Innovations in Simulation

Recently, we hosted webinars focused on strengthening feedback culture and exploring cutting-edge simulation in medical education. These sessions highlighted strategies for fostering open, constructive dialogue between educators and learners, as well as leveraging simulation technologies to create safe, immersive environments for skill development. By combining these approaches, we demonstrated how feedback and simulation can transform learning into a dynamic, practice-ready experience.

Upcoming AUA Webinar 2026:

Fellowships: A Strategic Decision

Deciding whether to pursue fellowship training has never been more complex. Fellowships offer significant advantages—specialized clinical expertise, academic growth, and leadership development. Yet, they also come with trade-offs: extended training timelines, financial costs, and delayed entry into independent practice.

Upcoming Webinar:

Navigating Fellowship Choices

Join us on December 10, 2025 as we explore the evolving role of fellowships and weigh the pros and cons of pursuing one in today's medical landscape. Our panelists will cover:

- *The Heart of Fellowship: Pursuing Advanced Training in Modern Times*
- *Benefits of Entering the Workforce Without a Fellowship*
- *Declining Pain Fellowship Applications in the U.S.*

Don't miss this discussion on opportunities, challenges, and strategies to align your fellowship decision with long-term career goals.

Looking Ahead: Annual Meeting Panels in Development

The Education Advisory Board (EAB) is already organizing an engaging panel for the upcoming annual meeting. Anticipate sessions that challenge traditional ideas and incorporate diverse perspectives from across academia.

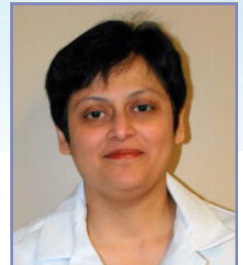
Medical education is experiencing a significant transformation, fueled by rapid technological advances and changing social dynamics. At the 2026 Annual Meeting, the EAB panel will explore these shifts in depth, engaging in a forward-looking discussion that aims to shape how we teach, learn, and prepare future healthcare professionals. This session will gather leading voices to analyze the tools, trends, and challenges shaping the next phase of medical training.

The discussion will explore the increasing role of learning management systems and multimedia resources, which are transforming the way medical knowledge is delivered and learned. These platforms not only broaden access but also create more personalized and interactive learning experiences. The panel will also examine the significant advances in technology and simulation, showcasing how high-fidelity simulations and virtual environments are closing the gap between classroom theory and clinical practice. These innovations are providing learners with essential skills in a safe, controlled setting, preparing them for real-world situations.

Beyond technology, the panel will explore the social effects of distance learning—a topic that has become more urgent in recent years. Remote education has created new opportunities for flexibility and inclusivity, but it also raises questions about collaboration, fairness, and the changing sense of professional identity among medical trainees. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing educational models that not only use technology but also maintain the human connections vital to healthcare.

This conversation is more than just an academic exercise; it serves as a roadmap for the future. We will gain insights that can inform curriculum design, institutional strategy, and learner support in an era of adaptability. The evolution of medical education is not a distant concept—it is happening now, and this panel will help you stay ahead of the curve. Join us at the 2026 Annual Meeting and participate in a dialogue that will shape the next generation of medical professionals.

Stay tuned for more updates—and don't miss the chance to be part of these important conversations. 



Arna Banerjee, MD, MMHC, FCCM
Chair, Educational Advisory Board
Vanderbilt University Medical Center
Nashville, TN

FROM THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD (SAB):

Funding Your Research Program – There is More Than One Fish in the Sea

We hope all of you had a great summer! As we are getting closer to the AUA meeting in March 2026, the SAB team is making arrangements for a panel discussion entitled “*Funding your research program – there is more than one fish in the sea*” (which is also the title of this SAB Winter Newsletter). For this timely panel discussion that will focus on diversifying research and funding strategies, we have engaged some wonderful, experienced speakers and hope to have a lively session with significant audience engagement and interactions.

Another focus point will be how SAB can contribute to providing the tools for a successful career for growing the new generation of physician-scientists. As stated previously, there is a growing number of medical students and clinician scientists striving to make a difference within our specialty through their research, education, and innovation efforts. SAB should take the lead in guiding them through the necessary processes to enter anesthesia/perioperative medicine training programs, obtain their first faculty positions, and set themselves on a path to success and professional satisfaction. We are excited to initiate a new effort during the pre-program meeting at AUA, where we will introduce current NIH T32 Directors to present and discuss the current funding environment, and approaches to keep our pipelines robust and engaged. This effort is led by Dr. Mintz from Johns Hopkins University.

All of us are inspired by colleagues and even trainees who are making all the difference in anesthesia research. In an effort to highlight physician-scientists within our area from whom we can learn, the Winter Newsletter showcases **Dr. Brant Wagener** from the University of Alabama, Birmingham. Dr Wagener is part of our SAB team. Here is his lab introduction:

“The primary, global question that our lab seeks to answer is “*how does acute critical illness become chronic critical illness?*” When patients become severely critically ill in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), there is ~25% mortality. Of the 75% that survive their stay in the ICU, ~50% will die in the next 1-2 years. Additionally, there is post-ICU cognitive dysfunction that occurs as a result of critical illness, regardless of mortality during the next two years. This mortality and morbidity are costly to patients in terms of their ability to take care of their families and to society in terms of health-care costs, days of work missed, and other burdens. We seek to understand why patients who survive

acute critical illness have ongoing morbidity and mortality that severely impair their life and society at-large.

Our lab uses a variety of patient biosamples along with clinical data and basic science research to answer these and related questions. First, we are funded by an RF1 from NIA to study how bacterial pneumonia after traumatic brain injury leads to cognitive dysfunction. We hypothesize that amyloids are generated in the lung after pneumonia that traverse to the brain or metastasize in a “prion-like” manner. Second, we are examining infection-independent lung injury that occurs after bacterial pneumonia has been treated. The amyloids that are generated in the lung are cytotoxic and can cause end-organ injury independent of the original infection.

Finally, we have created a multiinstitutional group named PRIME-AI (*P*erio*p*erative *R*esearch for *I*ntelligent *M*odeling and *E*valuation with *A*I) Group, consisting of 5 other institutions, that is externally validating our initial machine learning algorithm to detect unplanned care escalations after PACU discharge.” To learn even more about the Wagener lab, please visit his lab website at www.uab.edu/medicine/anesthesiology/research/labs/wagener-lab.

Another initiative the AUA SAB has been working on is to provide the membership with updates regarding the current funding situation and highlights the continued successes of physician-scientists in Anesthesiology. The update below has been provided by **Dr. Nicholas Douville**, a SAB member from the University of Michigan.

Spotlight on Anesthesiology Research: Thriving Amid Turbulence

The field of Anesthesiology has been grappling with an increasingly volatile funding landscape. Despite tightening federal funding, Anesthesiology stands as a beacon of innovation, powering breakthroughs in perioperative care, pain management, and critical interventions that save lives daily. Drawing from the latest NIH data and highlighting



Christina Pabelick, MD
Chair, Scientific Advisory Board
Mayo Clinic
Rochester, MN

Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)
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the groundbreaking work of Association of University Anesthesiologists (AUA) members, this article explores the current state of anesthesiology research—its triumphs, trials, and tactical pivots.

A Surge in Funding, But Shadows Loom

Anesthesiology research is riding high on NIH support, with total awards climbing steadily despite broader headwinds. According to the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research's FY2024 rankings (released March 2025), U.S. anesthesiology departments secured over \$200 million in NIH grants, up 5% from FY2023. Top performers include Stanford University (#1 with \$31.2 million), the University of Michigan (#1 for eight straight years at \$22.4 million in FY2022, sustained into 2024), and rising stars like the University of Pittsburgh (#6 with \$10 million—its highest ever). Duke (#3) and UTHealth Houston (#8 with \$8 million) round out the leaders, underscoring a field that's capturing nearly 10% of medical school-based anesthesiology funds.

Yet, volatility defines the climate. NIH's overall FY2025 budget flatlined at \$48.6 billion under a continuing resolution, with a 69% slash to the 21st Century Cures Innovation Account (from \$1.1 billion to \$127 million). Paylines have plummeted: competing grants funded at just 10-15% (down from 20% in 2024), stalling clinical trials and training. Delays in obligating appropriated funds have also idled projects. For Anesthesiology, this exacerbates a shrinking physician-scientist pipeline: only 26% of R-series grants go to MDs, per a 2022-2024 analysis, with women and early-career faculty underrepresented.

Policy ripples compound these woes. Cancellations targeting “non-priority” areas - like climate-health and health disparities research - jeopardize many studies. As one anonymous NIH staffer noted, “Valuable research is lost yearly with odds of winning grants halved since 2024.”

Navigating the Storm: Strategies for Resilience

Anesthesiology's response? Adaptive ingenuity. AUA and peers advocate mentorship as a force multiplier: A

2024 *Journal of Clinical Anesthesia* study by UF's Terrie Vasilopoulos, PhD, and Brenda Fahy, MD (both AUA members) found departments with formal programs secure 30% more NIH funds. A robust mentorship initiative, including Sadhasivam's work in pharmacogenomics and pediatric pain research, has helped fuel the University of Pittsburgh's dramatic climb in NIH funding.

Diversification is also key: 40% of top departments now blend NIH with private (e.g., IARS Mentored Awards) and industry sources. Collaborative hubs - like University of Michigan's Center for Consciousness Science, led by AUA Past President George Mashour, MD, PhD - pool resources for multi-PI grants, boosting success rates.

Looking ahead, FY2026 proposals demand bold pivots that emphasize alignment with NIH's changing priorities, which include chronic diseases. For example, AUA member Eric Sun, an Associate Professor of Anesthesiology, Perioperative, and Pain Medicine at Stanford University, received funding to investigate postoperative outcomes in patients with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias undergoing surgery, with the goal of developing personalized risk assessment models and evidence-based guidelines to optimize clinical decision-making, reduce complications, and enhance overall health outcomes for this vulnerable population.

In this crucible, AUA members exemplify grit. This resilience shines in AUA-supported mentorship programs, which have empowered early-career investigators to refine grant proposals, secure foundation funding as bridges, and elevate funding portfolios, fostering a culture of perseverance that has driven sustained academic productivity and breakthroughs in perioperative medicine.

A big thank you to the AUA leadership and to all of you, the AUA membership, for continuing to actively push for academic anesthesiology and perioperative medicine research at personal, institutional, national and international levels. As a field, we are uniquely positioned to remain strong during these interesting times, and AUA and the SAB are here to help and encourage everyone. 📖



AUA

Association of University Anesthesiologists

2026 Annual Meeting Update

AUA 2026 Annual Meeting [CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Registration for the AUA 2026 Annual Meeting is now open! Join us March 27 - 29, 2026, in Seattle, Washington, for an inspiring meeting!

We look forward to seeing you in Seattle!



Lodging is now open for the 2026 Annual Meeting in Seattle!

We're excited to announce that lodging is now officially open for the AUA 2026 Annual Meeting, taking place in Seattle, Washington, from March 27 - 29, 2026. Take advantage of exclusive hotel rates starting at \$199 per night (plus tax) – only available through the official AUA housing block. Reserve your room today – lodging closes on February 24th, 2026. Don't wait until it's too late, [book now!](#)



President's Reception



BURKE

MUSEUM

Get ready for a wonderful *Night at the Museum* and join us for the President's Reception on Saturday, March 28, as we wander the halls and connect with one another at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture. With over 18 million artifacts and specimens, you sure don't want to miss out on this night! The museum focuses on dinosaurs, fossils, Northwest Native art, plant and animal collections, and cultural pieces from across the globe.





AUA

Association of University Anesthesiologists

Save the Date for this Upcoming Event!

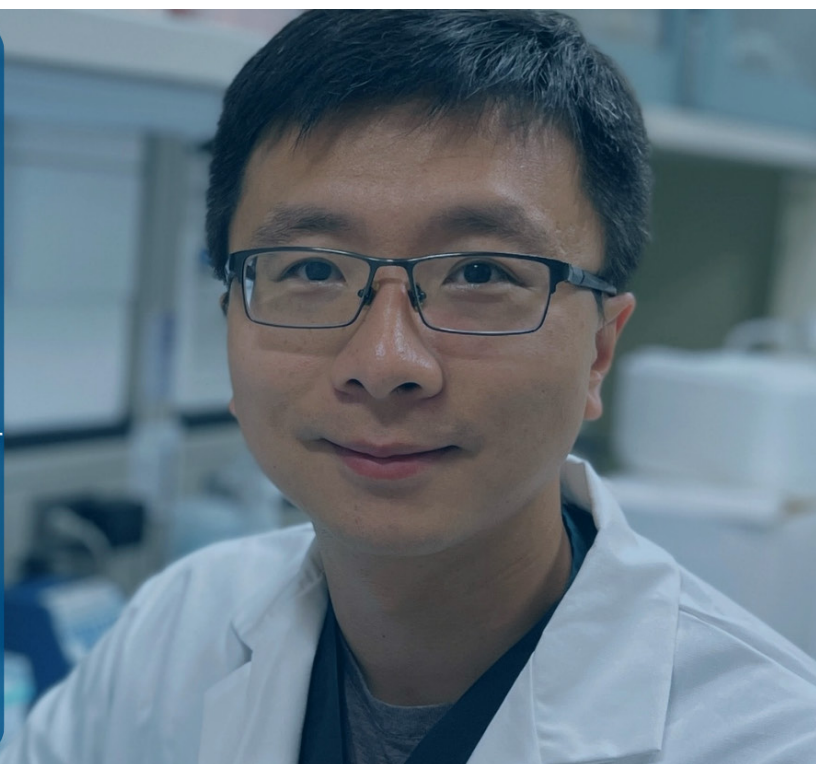
AUA 2026 Webinar Dates Coming Soon

FAER 2026 Spring Grant Cycle

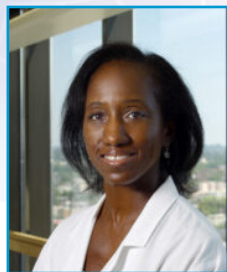
Applications for the Foundation for Anesthesia Education and Research's (FAER) Spring 2026 Grant Cycle are open through February 15, 2026! Grants available include the Mentored Research Training Grant (MRTG), Research in Education Grant (REG), and Research Fellowship Grant (RFG). This cycle also features the APSF-FAER MRTG, Letter of Intent (LOI) submissions for which are due to FAER by January 1, 2026. Also available on a rolling basis is the Transition to Independent Grant (TIG).

FIND OUT MORE at [FAER.org/Grants](https://www.fair.org/Grants)!

FAER
Foundation for Anesthesia
Education and Research



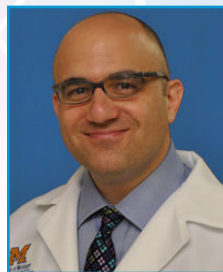
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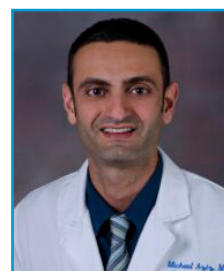
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If you have an idea for an article, an announcement, or an opinion on a recently published article, please submit your proposed article to the AUA Office at info@auahq.org. If your article is selected, we will contact you for editing and formatting.

Please review [AUA's Submission Guidelines](#) prior to submitting your proposed article.

Contact the AUA office with questions at info@auahq.org.



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